



orange county chapter

USGBC Orange County Chapter

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Item No. 4a

Newport Banning Ranch

PA2008-114

March 19, 2012

Members of the City Council of Newport Beach
The Office of the City Council
Newport Beach, CA 92663

Dear Council Members,

On behalf of the U.S. Green Building Council Orange County Chapter, I write today to express our organizational support for the Newport Banning Ranch project, which is registered under the LEED for Neighborhood Development program. In addition, we support public access to Banning Ranch, protection of sensitive habitat and maximization of open space.

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system is a nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings. LEED for Neighborhood Development is built off LEED's success and is a consensus based approach to land development of whole neighborhoods that unite the principles of smart growth, new urbanism, and green building to provide a common framework for evaluating and rewarding environmentally-superior neighborhood development practices.

LEED-ND encourages developers to embrace a comprehensive approach in the design, planning, and building of a neighborhood which promotes using alternative modes of transportation, improved air and water quality, and the construction of more sustainable communities for people of all income levels. Some highlighted features of building and certifying with LEED-ND include:

- **Decrease automobile dependence** – LEED-ND stresses public and convenient transportation choices such as buses, trains, bicycles, and increased sidewalks for walking. A focus of program certification in "smart location" meaning developing locations which produces shorter automobile trips and reduce traffic congestion. Additionally, a 2009 study found that houses with above-average levels of walkability, a core component of LEED-ND, command a premium of \$4,000 to \$34,000 over houses more spread out.
- **Protect threatened species** - Fragmentation and loss of habitat are major threats to many imperiled species. LEED-ND encourages compact development patterns and the selection of sites that are within or adjacent to existing development to minimize habitat fragmentation and also help preserve areas for recreation.
- **Lower Costs** - Benefits of LEED-ND neighborhoods include reduced infrastructure and operating costs for municipal governments.

The results of building LEED-ND projects are quite clear. Additionally, the process to register and earn LEED-ND certification also has a number of benefits including a whole-site approach to project planning and development, consensus and input from all stakeholders, and implementing industry best practices to help achieve maximum results. The Newport Banning Ranch project has already done due diligence in pursuing LEED-ND certification, registering under the program on 5/6/2010 and hosting a number of preliminary meetings with local officials and project stakeholders. However, to ultimately be certified, the plans for the project need to be reviewed by USGBC for pre-certification review prior to the first shovel hitting the ground.

We hope members of this council work with project developers, residents of Newport Beach, and all interested parties to advance this LEED-ND project. Please feel free to use USGBC California Orange County, and the whole U.S. Green Building Council network, including over 22,133 LEED certified professionals throughout California as a resource. As an organization, we are more than happy to assist in any form possible.

Sincerely,

Lindsey Engels
Executive Director, USGBC-OC